AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended): A workpiece carrier comprising:

a feed mechanism;

a carriage ~~fed and~~ driven by said feed mechanism; and

a casing accommodating at least a part of said feed mechanism and said carriage, said casing having at least one opening portion which is provided along a direction of feeding performed by said feed mechanism~~;~~, and

an elastic seal blade for sealing said opening portion,

wherein said carriage has a ~~block like~~ workpiece mounting seat~~,~~ which passes through said opening portion and projects upwardly from said casing, and also has a separating members connected to ~~provided at both~~ each ends of said workpiece mounting seat in a moving direction of said workpiece mounting seat, for separating said elastic seal blade from an outer surface of said workpiece mounting seat.

2. (currently amended): The workpiece carrier according to claim 1, wherein said separating member has a plurality of gas blowoff holes ~~in a part~~ facing said elastic seal blade.

3. (original): The workpiece carrier according to claim 1, wherein said separating member has a first magnetic force generating surface on a part thereof facing said elastic seal

blade, and wherein said elastic seal blade has a second magnetic force generating surface, which is provided on a part thereof facing said separating member and has a same polarity as that of said first magnetic force generating surface.

4. (original): The workpiece carrier according to claim 1, wherein said casing has a suction hole for setting an interior portion of said casing under a negative pressure.

5. (original): The workpiece carrier according to claim 1, wherein said elastic seal blade is constructed in such a way as to be easy to expand in a feed direction of said feed mechanism and as to be less easy to expand in a direction perpendicular to the feed direction.

6. (currently amended): The workpiece carrier according to claim 5, wherein said elastic seal blade is formed ~~like~~substantially as an elongated rectangle and has a plurality of incision grooves, and wherein said incision grooves are provided alternately in front and rear surface portions in such a way as to be parallel to one another in a direction perpendicular to a longitudinal direction of said elastic seal blade.

7. (currently amended): The workpiece carrier according to claim 5, wherein said elastic seal blade is formed ~~like~~substantially as an elongated rectangle and has a plurality of slits, and wherein said slits are provided in such a way as to extend in a direction perpendicular to a longitudinal direction of said elastic seal blade and as be parallel to one another.

8. (currently amended): The workpiece carrier according to claim 5, wherein said elastic seal blade is formed ~~like~~ substantially as an elongated rectangle and has a plurality of folding lines, and wherein said folding lines are provided in such a way as to extend in a direction perpendicular to a longitudinal direction of said elastic seal blade and as be parallel to one another.

9. (new): A workpiece carrier comprising:

a carriage;

a casing accommodating at least a part of said carriage and having at least one opening portion which is provided along a feed direction in which the carriage moves; and

a seal blade for sealing each opening portion,

wherein said carriage has at least one workpiece mounting seat corresponding to each opening portion and passing through said opening portion, said at least one workpiece mounting seat also having at least one separating member for separating said seal blade,

wherein said at least one separating member has a plurality of gas blowoff holes facing said seal blade for providing a gas having a pressure greater than that outside of said casing.

10. (new): The workpiece carrier according to claim 9, wherein said casing has at least one suction hole for setting an interior portion of said casing under a negative pressure.

11. (new): The workpiece carrier according to claim 9, wherein said at least one separating member has a plurality of gas blowoff holes facing said seal blade for providing a gas having a pressure greater than that outside of said casing such that the gas flow induced by the

total number of suction holes exceeds the gas flowing through the total number of gas blowoff holes.

12. (new): The workpiece carrier according to claim 9, wherein said at least one workpiece mounting seat has gas blowoff holes along an entire length facing said seal blade.

13. (new): A workpiece carrier comprising:

a carriage;

a casing accommodating at least a part of said carriage and having at least one opening portion which is provided along a feed direction in which the carriage moves; and

a seal blade for sealing each opening portion,

wherein said carriage has at least one workpiece mounting seat corresponding to each opening portion and passing through said opening portion, said at least one workpiece mounting seat also having at least one separating member for separating said seal blade,

wherein said seal blade includes flex channels disposed along the feed direction of said seal blade oriented substantially perpendicular to said feed direction, wherein each flex channel is a folding line, an incision groove or a slit.

14. (new): The workpiece carrier of claim 13, wherein said flex channels are disposed alternatively on the front and rear surface of said seal blade.